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SUBJECT: **BROWNFIELDS AND COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING**

Washington's local governments have historically played a vital role in the redevelopment of brownfields. Washington's Brownfields Coalition includes several excellent examples. Many jurisdictions throughout Washington have brownfields sites that they want to redevelop.

Where Brownfields Fit Into Comp Plans

Comprehensive plans developed under the Growth Management Act (GMA) must include seven mandatory elements. Several of these elements could include Brownfields. In particular, Brownfields might belong in these two elements: land use and economic development.

- Land Use Element: designates the general distribution and intended use of land. It includes an inventory of land designations. GMA requires land use plans provide for the protection of groundwater. Subsequently, they sometimes include the identification of brownfields sites.
- Economic Development Element: establishes local goals, policies, objectives, and provisions for economic growth and vitality. According to GMA, this element must include a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the local economy, which includes land use issues such as brownfields.

Suggested Comp Plan Components for Brownfields

- Definition of Brownfields
- Inventory of Brownfields Sites
- Identification of Priority Sites.
- Redevelopment Process
- Local Government's Role
- Potential Funding Sources

Brownfields and Economic Development Plans

Cleanup and redevelopment of brownfields makes economic sense. Brownfields typical result from years of commercial and industrial use. They often still have the infrastructure designed for these types of uses. In this sense, brownfields represents an economic opportunity.

A sustainable brownfields redevelopment process engages a variety of stakeholders. They include property owners, developers, governmental agencies, lenders, and community groups. A sustainable redevelopment process typically includes these four components: 1) initiation, 2) evaluation, 3) transaction, and 4) implementation.

Each component represents a unique phase of the development project. They often involve different groups of stakeholders. At the same time, it involves stakeholders who participate in each phase. In addition to property owners, these stakeholders often are government officials and/or planners.

Local Government's Role

The process to redevelop brownfields may extend over a number of years. Local governments possess the permanence to coordinate such a multi-year planning and redevelopment process. Plugging a section, or perhaps dedicating an entire element, into the comprehensive plan represents an initial step in that process.

Local governments play a vital role in the redevelopment of brownfields sites within their communities. The following list some of those roles:

- Integrate brownfields redevelopment with other priorities.
- Plug brownfields into the Comp Plan's public participation process.
- Broker the reuse of brownfield sites with prospective owners and government agencies.
- Provide funding for environmental assessment, remediation and/or coordinate other public funding.
- Maintain the environmental record for brownfields sites.
- Educate the public regarding brownfields prevention and remediation.

Land Banks and Redevelopment Districts

In some cases, local governments find themselves owning brownfields sites through tax foreclosure and/or abandonment. Local governments are not liable for environmental remediation upon such properties. Through the acquisition of these properties, whether it was voluntarily or involuntarily, these local governments essentially form a land bank.

Through land banks, governments can acquire, maintain and stabilize vacant, abandoned and tax-delinquent properties. They work with other entities to redevelop the property. These land banks enable local governments to use a number of market-driven strategies and incentives. Many state and federal agencies recognize these land banks as an effective economic development tool.

FURTHER READING

- [USEPA's Fact Sheet Regarding Land Banking](#)
- [MRSC's Industrial Land Banks for Counties](#)
- [USEPA's Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Fact Sheet](#)
- Example of Brownfields Element: [City of Adrian, Michigan](#)

Other effective strategies include “Brownfield Redevelopment Authorities” and/or redevelopment districts. They develop a master plan that includes the cleanup and redevelopment of brownfields sites. Many of these districts become “special tax” districts (e.g., Spokane’s Kendall Yards Tax Increment Finance District).

For More Information:

**WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BROWNFIELDS REVOLVING LOAN FUND**

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